Title: Discussion on the Cotton Cloth (Repeal) Bill, 2000. (Bill passed)

1413 hours

The Lok Sabha re-assembled after Lunch at thirteen minutes

Past Fourteen of the Clock.

(Shri P.H. Pandiyan *in the Chair*)

MR. CHAIRMAN : Now we shall take up the Legislative Business. Shri Kashiram Rana to move his motion.

THE MINISTER OF TEXTILES (SHRI KASHIRAM RANA): Sir, I beg to move:

"That the Bill to repeal the Cotton Cloth Act, 1918, be taken into consideration. "

The Cotton Cloth Act was enacted in 1918 with the primary objective of encouraging or maintaining the supply of cotton cloth manufactured in the country at reasonable rates to the poorer classes of the community. This Act has jurisdiction to the whole of India.

Under this Act, the State Governments are empowered to appoint a Controller for implementation of this Act and also an Advisory Committee to assist the Controller. The State Governments are also empowered to fix the price of the standard cloth, prescribing the authority for grant of licences for sale of standard cloth and other rule-making powers for giving effect to the provisions of the Act.

Under this Act, the Controller, so appointed, is empowered to make general or special orders for manufacture, transport, distribution and sale or purchase of cotton cloth. The Controller is also empowered to fix the price to be paid to the manufacturer, to declare and define the classes of standard cloth, etc. This Act also has provisions of penalties for contravention of its provisions with imprisonment up to six months or with fine or with both.

After Independence, the Central Government has enacted the Essential Commodities Act, 1955. As per this Act, the cotton and textiles are essential commodities. The Central Government, in exercise of the powers conferred upon it by section 3 of the Essential Commodities Act, has issued the Textile (Development and Regulation) Order, 1993 which is comprehensive and also covers all the provisions of Cotton Cloth Act, 1918. While the Cotton Cloth Act, 1918 deals with only one category *viz.* Cotton cloth, the Textile (Development and Regulation) Order 1993 deals with all types of cloth, yarn and other textiles. This order is implemented by the Textile Commissioner who is appointed by the Central Government and has jurisdiction to the whole of India. As such, the scope and focus of the Cotton Cloth Act in today's context is extremely narrow, though in 1918, the man-made fibre textiles were not in the scene. Therefore, in the present liberalised industrial scenario, the continuance of the Act is deemed superfluous and redundant.

Over the years, the textile industry is growing steadily. The production of cloth from 1980-81 to 1998-99 has risen by about 190 per cent at an average annual growth rate of 6 per cent. The *per capita* availability of cloth which was 17.30 square metre during 1980-81 rose to 28.19 square metre during 1998-99, an increase of about 63 per cent showing an average growth of 2.75 per cent. Apart from meeting the ever-increasing domestic need, the export of cotton textiles alone rose from Rs. 407 crore in 1981-82 to Rs. 16,448 crore in 1998-99. As such, in such a scenario, there is no need for the existence of irrelevant and obsolete Act such as the Cotton Cloth Act, 1918.

Over the years, the textile industry has undergone changes and now it is our endeavour to develop a strong and vibrant industry that can produce cloth of good quality at reasonable prices to meet the growing need of the people and to contribute to the economic growth of the nation and compete with confidence for an increasing share of the global market. For this purpose, the Government have taken several steps. The Technology Upgradation Funds Scheme which is in operation from 1st April, 1999 for modernisation of the textiles and jute industries, and the Technology Mission on Cotton Development are few of them.

The Cabinet has approved the proposal for repeal of the Cotton Cloth Act, 1918. The Commission on Review of Administrative Laws has also recommended the repeal of this Act.

I hope the hon. House will be pleased to approve the repeal of the Cotton Cloth Act, 1918.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Motion moved:

"That the Bill to repeal the Cotton Cloth Act, 1918, be taken into consideration. "

SHRI VARKALA RADHAKRISHNAN (CHIRAYINKIL): Sir, I am also supporting the move. While doing so, I have to point out certain factors which the Government may take into consideration.

In the first place, the British colonial rulers were magnanimous and very much interested in the poor people though we have thrown them out, we have driven them out. But the statute was intended to provide standard cloth to poor people at reasonable rates. For that purpose, this statute was passed by the colonial rulers. Even at that stage, at early as in 1918, the then foreign Government had the magnanimity and the goodwill to help the poor man in the State by providing them with standard cloth at reasonable rates.

What is the present position? Now, the industry has developed to such an enormous proportion that we are dealing with it as a whole. The Essential Commodities Act, 1955 had been passed. I also agree that the said Act will cover all these factors, and there is no doubt about that. But there must some machinery to see that the poor people are provided cloth at reasonable rates. We are now on the verge of globalisation, privatisation and liberalisation. The problem is competition. There will be severe competition in the cotton market. Cotton Industry is also facing a crisis. In the said circumstances, the Government should consider the possibility of providing cloth at reasonable rates to the poor people.

You are now repealing this Act. This Act was there for five or six decades, and there is no provision in any statute for giving cloth to the poor people at reasonable rates. Is there any provision like that? No State Government is prepared to enact a law giving protection to the poor man, who is in need of cloth. A very large section of the Indian population is living below the poverty line. They do not have the capacity to buy sufficient cloth to wear. The British people had this in mind. It is with that purpose that they enacted this Act of 1918. In the process of globalisation and privatisation, I would request the Central Government to find out a method by which sufficient cloth at reasonable rates could be given to the poor people. In place of this statute, we can make some provision either in the Essential Commodities Act or in some other statute so that sufficient cloth material could be made available to the poor people.

I think, the Government will seriously consider this aspect of giving some concession to the poor people in the purchases. During the Second World War, clothes were distributed to the poor people under the provisions of this Act. During the First World War and the Second World War, the Britishers used this statute for providing standard clothes to the poor people. If such a situation arises in future, it will not be possible for us to provide standard clothes at reasonable rates to the poor people. So, once again, I would request the Central Government to find out a method by which their rights are protected.

With these words, I support the Bill. There should be some machinery to provide clothes to the poor people.

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SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DASMUNSI (RAIGANJ): Mr. Chairman, Sir, this piece of legislation, though it is a very small piece of legislation, has a very wider impact. Therefore, on behalf of my Party, I rise to participate in this discussion, extending my full support to the Textiles Ministry.

Mr. Chairman, Sir, you may recall that in 1970-71, when the former Prime Minister Shrimati Gandhi nationalised the banks, abolished the Privy Purses, she said one thing, besides the slogan of "*garibi hatao*". She said, "Ever effort should be made to see that the women of this country, at least the poorest of the poor in the villages, are clothed properly". The name and fame of this country merely does not lie in how much industrial growth we have achieved or how much agricultural growth we have achieved or how much the GDP has increased, but the honour of the country precisely depends on how the women are living.

I recall that efforts were made with the help of various State Governments, textile units, both public sector as well as private sector, but mostly with the help of the State Governments, to ensure through the cooperative units that cheapest variety of clothes are made available to the women.

Somehow it was transformed when the Janata Party came to power in 1977. I remember very well the concept of *janata* saree. I must say that it was a noble idea and it was liked by the poorest of the poor people. Unfortunately, after all these years, when we go to the remote villages in the country - whether in Gujarat or Bengal or Rajasthan or wherever - we find that women feel ashamed to go out of their homes after sunrise to market place, to work, or to any other activity because they are not fully clothed.

I would like to give you one example because of which I am supporting this legislation. It was in the year 1989. I got

a message that *janata* sarees for the poorest of the poor would be made available at 20 different stores in my State. People waited very eagerly to buy *janata* sarees. In Bengal, as you know, during Durga Puja even the poorest of the poor feels that he should get something. I checked with all those 20 stores and I was told that all the sarees were sold. I asked as to what was the method of sale and if they had kept a record of sales. Even the cooperative units replied that all the sarees were sold. I felt very happy that *janata* sarees reached the targeted people. On the same day when I went to the *mandi,* I found that the *janata* sarees - which were to be sold to the poorest of the poor through the public distribution system or cooperatives under the Essential Commodities Act - were being sold at exhorbitant prices in the open market. Such clandestine activities went on for years together. Till date, there has been no check, no effort either by the State Government or the Union Government to control this. Of course, the subject comes under the State Government as it is they who have to implement the Essential Commodities Act. But these things are happening. Hon. Minister of Textiles is from Gujarat and he knows much more about the problems in the villages of Gujarat. I only request and plead with the present NDA Government to take stock of the situation.

In the context of Gujarat, I am reminded of a short story written by Tagore. He wrote about the way the villagers carry cotton in Gujarat. Gujarat was famous for cotton. I shed tears after reading the passage. It says that with bear body they bring the cotton, with tears in their eyes; and when they go back they feel that they were giving it to the civilised society in the city, but nothing is there for them. That was written by Tagore in his famous story *Kulit Prashan*.

I request the Textile Minister Shri Kashi Ram Rana to evolve a new policy in this regard. He should take stock of the cotton production in the country. He should take stock of the capacity, both in the public sector mills as well as in the private mills, and find out the total quantum of requirement in each State to mitigate the problems of the poorest of the poor. If Rs.50 is the daily wage for an agricultural worker − in some States it is Rs.35; in others it is Rs.45, and in yet others it is even Rs.60 − can any woman, after taking care of the requirements of the household − there are families in which only the women work and men do not - afford to buy two sarees in a year just to protect herself and to identify her as the daughter or mother of somebody? The Government ensures supply of food to the poor through PDS, it ensures implementation of programmes for food for work, to provide work in drought-prone areas, etc. Can the Government see to it that in this new millennium, no woman in any Indian village is left unclothed? If the Government can ensure this one thing, it will be the real achievement for this Government and for the civilisation.

I do not want to enter into a debate as to who did what. I do feel ashamed that population growth went on unchecked year after year. We could not check the growth of population. When a population control programme was followed in 1975 and 1977 aggressively, rightly or wrongly different kinds of interpretations came. With the present quantum of cotton production, its availability in the market and the surplus that could be given to the poorest of the poor, we could not make it a success. Today, there are abundant resources. Industrial and agricultural growth is on the rise.

Therefore, I would request the hon. Minister of Textiles to precisely come out with a policy to ensure variety of cloth for the poorest of the poor in a guaranteed manner. If one family of an agriculture community, an agriculture labour or even of an artisan in the village is ensured that his daughter or his wife or his mother would be provided with two pieces of cloth in a year at a very cheap rate, I think, that will be the real achievement of this civilisation.

If we could not do it in the Congress regime in fifty years, we feel ashamed of it. But please you do it. We will salute you. This is the only cry of this country. When I visit the villages, I really shut my eyes to see the conditions of the poorest of the poor. But they are feeling that we are doing wrong things there while going to the village. So, it is very difficult for us to go to the villages because the villagers there have no clothing. During election time also I say about it. So, I shed my tears and feel very much about it being a citizen of this country on what we have done for them.

Therefore, can you evolve any mechanism or any policy, in whatever manner that you may feel right, to ensure the poorest of the poor women, at least, two piece of cloth in a year?

डा. रघुवंश प्रसाद सिंह (वैशाली) : सभापति महोदय, सरकार सूती कपड़े के कानून को समाप्त करने के लिए विधेयक लाई है। उसने दावा किया है कि यह कानून 1918 का था। 1955 के कानून के हिसाब से और 1993 को जो आर्डर निकला था, उस हिसाब से यह कानून अनावश्यक हो गयाहै इसलिए इस एक्ट को हम समाप्त करते हैं। माननीय सदस्य दासमुंशी जी और राधाकृणनन जी ने सही चिंता व्यक्त की कि व्यक्ति की मूलभूत तीन आवश्यकताएं हैं, रोटी, कपड़ा और मकान। उसमें कपड़े का महत्व किसी से कम नहीं है। गरीब आदमी को उचित दाम पर कपड़ा उपलब्ध हो, उसके लिए 1918 में कानून बनाया गया था। जब महात्मा गांधी जी चम्पारण गए थे, उस समय वे मोहनदास कर्मचन्द गांधी थे। जब वे सड़क पर खड़े थे और घर की महिलाएं उन्हें देख रही थीं, तो उन्होंने कस्तूरबा जी को उन्हें बुलाने के लिए भेजा। जब कस्तूरबा जी वहां गई और उन्होंने घर से झांकती हुई महिलाओं को आने को कहा, पर वे नहीं आईं। तब वे भीतर गईं और बाहर आकर उन्होंने गांधी जी को बताया कि वे सभी महिलाएं अर्धनग्न हैं, कपड़े के अभाव में नहीं आ रहे हैं तो उसी समय मोहनदास कर्मचन्द गांधी ने अपने सारे कपड़े उतार कर फेंक दिए और केवल एक धोती और अंगोछा रख लिया। उसी समय से वे महात्मा गांधी हो गए। उन्होंने यह महसूस किया कि हिन्दुस्तान के एक-एक व्यक्ति पर जितना कपड़ा होना चाहिए, उतना नहीं है, खास कर महिलाओं के लिए, उस हालत में पूर्ण वस्त्र पहनने का औचित्य नहीं है। इसी कारण एक धोती को लपेट वे महात्मा गांधी हो गए। इसका मतलब यह कि हिन्दुस्तान में कपड़े का अभाव है। खास कर गरीब आदमी के लिए तो जाड़े के दिन ऊनी तो क्या सूती कपड़ा भी नहीं

मिलता। इसीलिए वह आग ताप कर और चारपाई पर वही पुराना कपड़ा जो ओढ़ा होता है, उसे बिछा कर सोता है। इसलिए यह कानून बना था कि गरीब आदमी को उचित दाम पर कपड़ा मिले, जिससे वह अपना तन ढंक सके। उस कानून को खत्म कर रहे हैं, लेकिन उसके वैकल्पिक प्रबंध के बारे में कहा है कि राज्य सरकारें कानून बना रही हैं। राज्य सरकारों ने तो अपने-अपने राज्यों में जनता धोती स्कीम भी चलाई थी।

वहां देखा कि कागजी कार्रवाई ज्यादा हो रही है। कागज में सूत खरीदा, जनता में सारी धोती बंट गई और गरीब लोगों ने पहन भी ली, हेराफेरी होती है। गरीबों में जो कपड़ों की कमी है, उसकी आपूर्ति नहीं हो सकती, इसके लिए सरकार को आगे आना चाहिए और गरीब आदमी को कपड़ा उचित दाम पर मिले, उसका प्रबंध होना चाहिए। उसमें हम कैसे अपेक्षा करें ? खादी आज़ादी की लडाई का प्रतीक थी और खादी कमीशन देश भर में चालू है, हजारों लोग उसमें लगे हुए हैं। उसमें भी जितनी सरकारी सहायता थी, सब बंद हो गई। सरकार को खादी से क्यों दुश्मनी है ? खादी तो आज़ादी की लड़ाई का सूचक है। महात्मा गांधी जी ने अंग्रेज़ियत के खिलाफ आंदोलन चलाया था कि अंग्रेजों के द्वारा तैयार किया गया वस्त्र लोग नहीं पहनेंगे, हिन्दुस्तान के लोगों द्वारा तैयार किया गया वस्त्र ही पहनेंगे और खादी में सरकारी सहायता क्यों बंद की गई, यह मैं सरकार से जानना चाहता हूं। खादी के संबंध में खादी भंडार वाले मुझ से मिले थे, उन्होंने बताया कि जितनी भी सहायता तथा सुविधा अक्तूबर में खादी के मामले में दी जाती थी और खादी सस्ती की जाती थी जिससे लोग खादी पहनते थे, वह सब बंद हो गई है।...(व्यवधान)

श्री प्रभुनाथ सिंह : आप खादी का जूता चप्पल क्यों नहीं पहनते हैं, खादी से आपको इतना प्रेम है ?

डा. रघुवंश प्रसाद सिंह : खादी का जूता चप्पल और मज़बूत होता है लेकिन देखने में थोड़ा आर्कषक नहीं होता।...(व्यवधान)

संसदीय कार्य मंत्री तथा सूचना प्रौद्योगिकी मंत्री (श्री प्रमोद महाजन) : लोग आपके चेहरे की तरफ देखेंगे, जूते की ओर कौन देखेगा ? ...(व्यवधान)

डा. रघुवंश प्रसाद सिंह : जूते उल्टे पड़ जायें तो क्या करें ? हम कैटिगरीकली कहना चाहते हैं कि इसकी जानकारी ली जाये कि किस हालत में खादी में मिल रही सरकारी सहायता रोक दी गई है और ऐसा क्यों किया गया है ? देश भर के आज़ादी की लड़ाई में जो लोग शामिल थे और महात्मा गांधी जी का सूत, तकली और चरखा, उसको क्यों बंद किया गया, मैं समझ नहीं पा रहा हूं। कानून तो खत्म किया है, ठीक है लेकिन गरीब आदमी को कपड़ा सस्ते दाम पर मिले, इसका प्रावधान होना चहिए। खादी में मिल रही केन्द्रीय सहायता भी सरकार को तुरंत बहाल करनी चाहिए, सरकार को तुरंत मदद देनी चाहिए। इन्हीं शब्दों के साथ मैं आपको धन्यवाद देता हूं।

वस्त्र मंत्री (श्री काशीराम राणा) : सभापति महोदय,. कॉटन क्लॉथ एक्ट के निरीक्षण के लिए जो मैं बिल लाया हूं और माननीय सदस्यों ने उसमें जो पार्टिसिपेशन किया, उसके लिए मैं सभी माननीय सदस्यों का आभारी हूं। मुझे खुशी भी है कि सभी ने इस कानून को रद्द करने के लिए यहां सम्मति जताई है। मैंने शुरूआत में ही कहा कि जो भी कॉटन क्लॉथ एक्ट प्रावधान था, हमने एसेंशियल कमोडिटीज एक्ट 1955 के तहत ऑर्डर निकाला और सभी कवर कर लिया है, इसलिए कानून में जो ओवरलैपिंग थी, हम चाहते हैं कि कानून में सिम्पलीफिकेशन हो, ओवरलैपिंग न हो और इसकी वजह से यह कानून रद्द करने के लिए हम सभागृह में आये हैं । जैसे कि राधाकृणन जी ने यहां सवाल उठाया कि गरीब लोगों को, उनकी जो रिक्वॉयरमेंट है, उनको कपड़ा पहुंचाना चाहिए। सरकार इस बारे में बहुत ही गंभीर है खास तौर से मिनिस्ट्री ऑफ टैक्सटाइल्स भी जैसे कि रोटी, कपड़ा और मकान सूत्र आज़ादी के पहले भी था और अब भी है।

सरकार चाहती है कि देश के गरीब से गरीब तबके के लोगों को रिजनेबल रेट्स पर कपड़ा पहुंचाया जाए। सरकार ने जो पालिसी इम्पलीमेंट की है, उस पालिसी के तहत, जैसा मैंने बताया, कपड़े का उत्पादन बढ़ा है और पर-कैपिटा कपड़े का कन्जम्पशन भी बढ़ा है। हमने जो नई योजनायें लागू की हैं, उसके तहत हम गरीब तबके के लोगों को रिजनेबल रेट्स पर कपड़ा पहुंचाने में अवश्य सफल होंगे। इसके अलावा आपने कहा है कि अगर शार्टेज हो गई, तो क्या किया जाएगा - इसी बात को ध्यान में रखते हुए, हमने इस कानून को निरस्त करते हुए, सारे प्रावधान एसेंशियल टैक्सटाइल आर्डर 1993 में रखे हैं। इसके तहत हम एक्शन लेकर ऐसी परिस्थिति पैदा नहीं होने देंगे।

माननीय सदस्य, प्रियरंजन दास मुंशी जी, ने ठीक ही कहा है कि पहले देश भर में जनता क्लोथ स्कीम लागू थी और खासकर गरीब लोगों, बहनों के लिए साड़ी और भाइयों के लिए धोती, के लिए यह व्यवस्था थी। इन्होंने इस योजना को फिर से लागू करने पर जोर दिया है। हम भी नहीं चाहते हैं कि इस देश के गरीब से गरीब लोग, चाहे हमारी बहनें हों या भाई, बिना कपड़े के रहें। हम हर व्यक्ति को कपड़ा पहनाना चाहते हैं। आपको इस बात की जानकारी होगी, देश में कपड़े का उत्पादन हो रहा है और अब मार्केटिंग का सवाल पैदा हो रहा है। सवाल इस बात का नहीं है कि उसके दाम ऊंचे हैं, सवाल मार्केटिंग का पैदा हो रहा है। मैं पिछले साल के आंकड़ों से उसकी तुलना करूं, तो कपड़े की कीमत सस्ती हुई है। आप जानते हैं, यह स्कीम किस वजह से बन्द हुई। अगर इस स्कीम में घपला नहीं होता, तो यह स्कीम अच्छी तरह से चलती रहती। यह स्कीम इस सरकार ने बन्द नहीं की है, पहले से बन्द है। फिर भी आपने जो भावना व्यक्त की है, मैं उसको सरकार के सामने रखूंगा और इस पर विचार किया जाएगा।

माननीय सदस्य, रघुवंश प्रसाद जी, ने खादी के बारे में अपनी बात कही है। खादी पर रिबेट के बारे में, जो नहीं मिलता है और परिस्थिति पैदा हुई है, मैं अपने साथी मंत्री महोदय को अवश्य बताऊंगा। लेकिन मैं सदन मे यह आश्वासन जरूर देना चाहूंगा कि इस देश में छोटे से छोटे व्यक्ति को कपड़े का अभाव नहीं होगा, ऐसी पूरी व्यवस्था सरकार करेगी।

मुझे खुशी है कि सभी माननीय सदस्यों ने इस बिल को पारित करने के लिए अपनी सहमति व्यक्त की है और मैं निवदेन करता हूं कि इस बिल को पारित किया जाए।

MR. CHAIRMAN : The question is:

"That the Bill to repeal the Cotton Cloth Act, 1918, be taken into consideration. "

The motion was adopted.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The House shall now take up clause by clause consideration of the Bill.

The question is:

"That clause 2 stand part of the Bill."

The motion was adopted.

Clause 2 was added to the Bill.

Clause 1, the Enacting Formula and the Title were added to the Bill.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Minister may now move that the Bill be passed.

THE MINISTER OF TEXTILES (SHRI KASHIRAM RANA): Sir, I beg to move:

"That the Bill be passed."

MR. CHAIRMAN: The question is:

"That the Bill be passed."

The motion was adopted.